

***Preserving a difficult heritage: the afterlife of Fascist monumental art in contemporary Italy***

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Most of the urban projects realized during the *Ventennio* remain part of the Italian landscape and, together with architectural monuments and works of art, create a constellation of surviving images of Fascist and colonial visual culture in contemporary Italy. As part of the national cultural heritage these artefacts are protected by preservation laws. However, in the ambiguous process whereby Italy confronts its Fascist and colonial past, they have also become a nexus of critical debate and political struggle. This paper focuses on the cultural and material history of selected works of fascist-era monumental art, examining their afterlife from postwar to contemporary Italy. It investigates the ways these anachronic presences have been negotiated within a democratic state and examines the potential strategies for a critical preservation that is able to contextualize and undermine ideologically charged sites. Starting from an historical perspective and focusing on the reception of these works, the aim is to critically examine the diversity of approaches used for their conservation in contemporary Italy and to investigate the role played by the art historical discipline.

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